

# Strawberry

## Grow

Strawberries are fruits that grow on small plants.<sup>1</sup> They have been found growing in the woods, by the seaside, and on mountaintops. Strawberries are native to the northern and southern hemispheres.<sup>2</sup> Wild strawberries date back to the times of the Greeks and Romans.<sup>3</sup>

Strawberries are grown from young plants, or plugs, that can be purchased at a garden center. Strawberries are grown as annuals commercially. In North Carolina, they can be planted 12 inches apart in fall and harvested in spring. Make sure to mulch them with straw or plastic covering. Water sufficiently until established. Strawberry plants may bear fruit for more than one season if they have been maintained for adequate spacing.<sup>1</sup>

**Fun Fact:** North Carolina is the 4th largest strawberry producer in the nation!<sup>4</sup>

## Choose

### Be Picky!

Did you know that there are more than 70 varieties of strawberries?<sup>3</sup> The most popular commercial varieties are Camarosa, Chandler, Sweet Charlie, Camino Real, Bish and Galleta.<sup>1</sup>

Strawberries can be available year round. Peak season in the United States is May to July and in North Carolina is mid-April to mid-June.<sup>2,5</sup> Some growers can produce ripe strawberries in the fall, winter or very early spring using high tunnels or greenhouses. Some growers are planting “day neutrals” which produce strawberries all summer.<sup>2</sup>

Strawberries must be picked by hand because they are very delicate and bruise easily.<sup>6</sup> North Carolina has many “pick your own” farms.<sup>4</sup> Strawberries will not ripen after picking. Choose strawberries with a solid red color, and very little green or white. Strawberries should not have any mold or be leaky or damaged. The green caps should look fresh.<sup>5,7</sup>

**Fun Fact:** May is National Strawberry Month!<sup>8</sup>



## Store

Fresh, raw strawberries can be purchased in large flats or half trays or in a smaller plastic container, called a “clamshell.” Keep strawberries in the container and place in the coldest part of the refrigerator—32-36°F. Typical shelf life is 5-7 days. Do not wash or remove caps from strawberries until you are ready to serve.<sup>5</sup>

**Fun Fact:** Strawberries change colors as they ripen. They start as green and go from white to pink and finally to red when they are ripe and ready to be harvested.<sup>7</sup>

## Use

Strawberries are usually eaten raw. They are sold fresh as whole strawberries. In frozen form, they can be whole, sliced or pureed. Strawberries can also be dried or made into jams, preserves or syrup. Strawberries are fun to eat fresh, whole or sliced, as a snack. You can also add them to salads. Mix with lowfat yogurt. Use as a topping for waffles, pancakes or cereal. Or blend into smoothies.<sup>3</sup>

It is important to wash strawberries well just before eating them. To keep your strawberries fresh, wait to wash them until you are ready to eat them. Rinse your strawberries thoroughly under clean, running water. Drain them with a strainer. Then, pat them dry with a clean, single use paper towel or drain in a colander.<sup>7</sup>

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## Teach

**To be or not to be...Is a strawberry really a berry?** A strawberry is not considered a true berry (like blueberries and cranberries) because its seeds are on the outside of the fruit. Did you know that an average strawberry has around 200 seeds? Each “seed” on the outside of a strawberry is considered an individual fruit.<sup>1,3,6,7</sup>

**Fun Fact:** The name strawberry comes from the fact that strawberry plants are frequently mulched with straw to protect their delicate roots.<sup>2</sup>

### It's Always Sunny

In order for strawberries to grow to their full potential, they need about 6 hours of direct sunlight every day.<sup>7</sup>

### Globe Trotters

Strawberries are grown throughout the United States and Canada, France, Italy, the United Kingdom, Bulgaria, Poland, southern and eastern Africa, New Zealand, Australia and Japan. The U.S. is the leading producer of strawberries in the world.<sup>8</sup>

**Fun Fact:** Strawberries are the official state Red Berry for North Carolina.<sup>9</sup>

### Class Activity:

#### Steps:

1. As a class, brainstorm all of the ways that students like to eat strawberries.
2. Ask students to share their favorite strawberry recipes.
3. Have students vote for their favorite ways to eat strawberries.
4. Graph the results.
5. As a class, brainstorm a list of red fruits.
6. Have students vote for their favorite red fruits.
7. Graph the results.
8. Create a display of the project results to share with the school.

**Fun Fact:** Strawberry is the 5<sup>th</sup> most popular fruit in the U.S. behind bananas, apples, oranges, and grapes.<sup>10</sup>

## Eat

### Strawberries are super!

Strawberries are a superfood—packed with nutrients. Not only are strawberries deliciously sweet but they also help keep you healthy. Strawberries are an excellent source of vitamin C and a good source of fiber. A cup of whole strawberries has around 50 calories and 140 percent of the vitamin C Daily Value. Strawberries are cholesterol free and low in fat and sodium. Vitamin C helps form collagen to hold muscles, bones and tissues together, protects us from infections and bruising, aids in healing, keeps our gums healthy, helps our body absorb iron and folate from plants, and acts as an antioxidant to prevent cell damage. Soluble fiber can help lower cholesterol. Insoluble fiber aids digestion. Strawberries have a variety of phytochemicals—flavonoids, ellagitannins, and ellagic acid. Anthocyanidins, a flavonoid sub-group, contribute to the blue, red and purple pigments of berries and other fruits. Phytochemicals act as antioxidants preventing or repairing cell damage. Anthocyanidins may help with maintaining brain and healthy immune function.<sup>3,6,7,11</sup>

**Fun Fact:** Eight strawberries contain more vitamin C than one orange.<sup>6</sup>

## Find

For more strawberry info and resources, visit:

1. North Carolina State Extension, [www.ces.ncsu.edu](http://www.ces.ncsu.edu)
2. N.C. Strawberry Association, [www.ncstrawberry.com](http://www.ncstrawberry.com)
3. Nebraska Extension, <http://lancaster.unl.edu/nep/fruitveggie.shtml>
4. N.C. Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services, [www.gottobenc.com](http://www.gottobenc.com)
5. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, [www.fns.usda.gov](http://www.fns.usda.gov)
6. California Strawberry Commission, [www.californiastrawberries.com](http://www.californiastrawberries.com)
7. University of California-Davis, <http://anrcatalog.ucdavis.edu/pdf/8256.pdf>
8. Britannica, [www.britannica.com](http://www.britannica.com)
9. N.C. Secretary of State, [www.secretary.state.nc.us/kidspg/symbols.htm](http://www.secretary.state.nc.us/kidspg/symbols.htm)
10. Agricultural Marketing Resource Center, [www.agmrc.org](http://www.agmrc.org)
11. Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org)